

Apathy of Americans concerns 'ex-spy'

By Jerry Dean
GAZETTE STAFF

What the American public doesn't know about espionage — military, industrial and diplomatic — might indeed hurt it.

That's the concern of Peter N. James, 45, a former rocket engineer who says he spied overseas for the Central Intelligence Agency in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

As a self-styled "ex-spy," James is appalled at the ease with which American workers having top secret security clearances sidestep "spot checks" and pass highly classified documents to Soviet agents. The diplomacy of "detente" alone cost the United States \$50 billion in technological know-how, handed free to the Soviet Union for use in its military, he said.

James, at Little Rock last week for a speech sponsored by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Union Programs Council, said he had given up his engineering career and no longer was a spy.

Now he travels, talks to experts on espionage and reports what he learns to American audiences at paid engagements. He believes knowledge of intelligence gathering is critical to Americans' improved understanding of dangers posed to free society by foreign agents.

James, a Jamestown, N.Y., native who now lives at Cape Coral, Fla., graduated from Case Institute of Technology in 1962 with a physics degree. Pratt and Whitney, an aerospace manufacturer, hired him as a rocket engineer, made him a "foreign technology expert" then fired him in 1971.

While he was an employee, he said, the CIA asked him to report certain information gleaned from international scientific conferences he routinely attended where Soviet scientists and engineers were present. He remained on the Pratt and Whitney payroll and was never required to sign a CIA secrecy oath, so he may write about what he has learned.

Gathered data from conferences

Pratt and Whitney, he said, fired him when he threatened to expose

"corruption within the military-industrial complex." Since, James has written two books, "Soviet Conquest From Space" and "The Air Force Mafia," based on what he learned.

"I thought I'd be an engineer the rest of my life," James said at a news conference before his speech last week. "But I was naive. I thought our intelligence people knew everything. But the experts in any field know more about what's happening there than agents do. The CIA would ask, 'You're the expert. Look at this information and tell us what it means.'"

James said he had known of "a handful" of Air Force officers who "prepared fraudulent intelligence reports" to make it appear that particular military policies or systems were needed to counter imaginary "defense threats."

The American public, James said, is either blithely unaware or apathetic about such corruption.

When it learns of massive cost overruns, overcharging for tools or spare parts, the offending corporations are lightly fined and guilty individuals never are punished, he said.

James praised the FBI for recent investigations of former Navy submariner John A. Walker Jr., his son, Yeoman Michael Walker, and brother, former antisubmarine warfare specialist Arthur J. Walker, all charged with passing classified data on submarine strategic weapons to Soviet KGB agents.

Such arrests, James said, too often occur long after critical material is compromised. He called the Walker case "a classic example" of

how easily secrets are passed to the Soviets. One problem, he said, is proliferation of classified material.

Speaking of the August defection and November "redefection" of Vitaly S. Yurchenko, a master KGB spy, James doubted the episode was an attempt to scuttle the Reagan-Gorbachev summit. "The Russians needed those talks," James said, just as they needed previous Nixon talks that brought Soviet-American detente and let them "shore up their faltering economy."

Yurchenko defected at Rome but, once in the United States, he fled CIA custody and proclaimed at the Soviet Embassy that he'd been abducted. James theorized the Yurchenko affair was intended to portray the United States as a "human rights" violator.

The American military operation on Grenada, James said, should be a model for future covert American intelligence action. Neither newsmen nor the public knew of the invasion until its aims were accomplished. The press, James said, should accompany future actions only under agreement not to file reports until surprise had been achieved.